from the Oka, a left tributary of the Angara, to the Onon and Argun steppes in the east. At that time they already knew how to extract salt and to process iron. They were known as the trade middlemen between the Tungus hunting peoples and the Chinese. From the Tungus they acquired valuable furs (sable) by barter in exchange for food, especially millet, and these furs they exchanged with Chinese traders for silver and goods from China. In this period, under the leadership of the "Noyone," the tribal divisions had been transformed into fixed, almost state-like organizations, which were in a position to give successful resistance to the Cossacks pressing in in the seventeenth century. The first information which the Cossacks received of Transbaykal described the land as having a wealth of valuable furs and silver. 175

Even the Irkutsk Buryat accomplished vigorous resistance, and in many instances smaller Cossack divisions were defeated or annihiliated. In the course of battles lasting years the Cossacks succeeded in getting a foothold in Transbaykal in individual bases, which were built up into small fortresses. In 1646 Verkhne Angarsk was founded at the mouth of the Upper Angara on Lake Baykal, in 1648 Barguzin was founded, Nerchinsk in 1654, Selenginsk /now: Novo-Seleginsk/ in 1665, Verkhne Udinsk (Ulan-Ude) in 1666. Nevertheless the Buryat did not submit so easily to the will of the Cossacks, whose power did not extend far beyond the bases. Twice great uprisings broke out, and for months the bases were cut off from all contact and exposed to a severe siege. Smaller posts were pillaged, the personnel slaughtered, and the buildings destroyed. However, in the long run the Buryat could not hold out against the firearms and the better organization of the Russians. Many retreated into Mongolia, but from there they again and again /104/ made attacks. Only after the Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1639 did peace return to the land. With that colonization by the Russians began.

The Old Peoples

Three groups can be distinguished among the old peoples presently occupying Transbaykal and the far eastern region: the Mongols, the Tungus, and the Paleoasiatics. The Buryat are the sole representative of the Mongols in Baykal, while the Tungus and Paleoasiatic peoples are distributed over the entire far eastern region. 101 144

The Buryat occupy the region west and east of Lake Baykal.